

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK:

I am pleased to announce the appointment of Sonia M. Vargas as acting director of the Miami-Dade Housing Agency (MDHA) Private Rental Housing Division. Many of you know Sonia and have worked with her during her eight years as assistant director of the Finance and Administration division. With over 28 years' experience in Miami-Dade County — 27 of them at MDHA — I am confident that her knowledge and background in Section 8 operations, human resources, budgeting, as well as fiscal and property management will prove to be an asset in her new assignment.

We have carefully selected a group of employees with extensive experience in Section 8 operations and management which Sonia brought with her - Madeline Clodfelter, Arlene Olivera, Jeannie Mendoza, Stephanie Rahming-Ballard, and Adriana Giraldo. Together, they will implement numerous improvements to the division

and are very excited about the challenges ahead.

Please rest assured that the new team is fully committed to our programs, our division, our employees, our owners, and our tenants, and will strive to provide you with the level of professionalism you expect and deserve.

We welcome your suggestions and support, and look forward to working with all of you.

Sincerely,



Alphonso K. Brewster
MDHA Director



Sonia M. Vargas

Additional Funding for Permanent Housing for Homeless

The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recently awarded Private Rental Housing's Shelter Plus Care (S+C) program \$4,153,884 in grant renewals and \$1,787,100 in new funding to provide housing for almost 600 homeless individuals and families with disabilities.

S+C staff, along with the Homeless Trust and other community organizations, is already meeting to plan, develop, and submit another successful Super NOFA application to HUD for next year's renewal and new funding cycle.

Other S+C projects — which should be operational soon — include Carrfour's Villa Aurora and Royalton programs with 25 and 77 units respectively; Camillus House's Barrett Place, 20 units; Citrus Health Network's First Place, 37 units, for a total of 159 additional units of permanent housing for the homeless.

For more information on these programs, call Susana Cortázar at 305-250-4382.

EIV Program Verifies Income

MDHA, in partnership with HUD, is now using the Enterprise Income Verification (EIV) program, a computer matching system that verifies the accuracy of income reported to us by Section 8 tenants. EIV matches this information — to include income from jobs, Social Security and SSI, unemployment compensation, and other sources — to

that information held by other government agencies. This will enable us to detect fraud, thereby saving federal funds. Failure by a participant to report accurate financial data to MDHA may result in the tenant having to enter into a repayment agreement and jeopardizing participation in the program.

Section 8 tenants recently received a letter and flyer regarding the EIV program; however, landlords are encouraged to remind tenants to report all income to MDHA.

Owner Referral Listings a Success

Clients continue to achieve great success in locating units through our owner referral listings, which are updated every two weeks. A wonderful example of this is that of a North Carolina family who received a voucher as a result of one of last year's many hurricanes. The tenant accessed our owner referral listings, moved to Miami, found a unit, and is now happily living in her new home.

Listings are available on our website. Please keep these much-needed referrals coming!!! For additional information, you may call Erica King at 305-860-5559.

Transfer of Ownership Requirements/Owner Notification

Remember that properties subsidized under a HUD Section 8 Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contract cannot be

transferred to a new owner without MDHA approval. Even though these properties are privately owned, the HAP contract was entered between the owner and MDHA; therefore, owners are under obligation to follow the HAP contract, which prohibits assignments of the contract without prior written consent by MDHA.

Existing owners are responsible for initiating the approval process for the new owner and must advise same of any pending inspection violations.

Please remember that a sale or transfer of a Section 8 subsidized property without proper notification and written approval by MDHA is considered a breach of the HAP contract; the contract and subsidy payments will be terminated, and HAPs will be stopped. The new owner will not be entitled to receive HAPs and former owners will be required to return to MDHA any HAPs received after the sale of the property.

Better Way Reaches a Milestone

On November 18, 2005, the Better Way Tenant Association celebrated the ten-year anniversary of the Shelter Plus Care program's Better Way Apartments, a 55-unit site for formerly homeless, disabled individuals. The association — made up of current tenants and alumni — presented MDHA with a certificate of appreciation for its countless contributions to the program.

Our congratulations go to Better Way Executive Director Beth Lang, and her staff for their outstanding efforts in making this program successful.





FREQUENTLY CALLED NUMBERS

Director's Office.....	305-250-5236
Customer Service.....	305-250-5232
Section 8 Operations	305-250-5250
Inspections Unit.....	305-250-5244
Scheduling.....	305-250-1710
	305-250-5538
Homeownership/ Landlord Outreach.....	305-250-5054
Placing a unit on referral list.....	305-860-5559
Survey Unit.....	305-250-5056
Shelter Plus Care/ SRO Programs.....	305-250-4449
Multi-family Unit.....	305-860-5516
Family Self- Sufficiency	305-860-5539
Hearings Unit	305-644-5143
Accounting.....	305-250-5259
	305-250-4360
	305-860-5514
Applicant & Leasing Center.....	305-638-6464

Earned Income Tax Credit

Owners, let your tenants know that low to moderate-income citizens can save money, get their taxes prepared at a free tax preparation center, and apply for earned income tax credit (EITC). Individuals and families can receive up to \$4,000 through the EITC, which is available to those earning under \$37,000 a year. There are over 70 free tax preparation sites in the county. For more information on this service, visit www.prosperitycampaign.org or call 311.

Direct Deposit for Owners is Now Available

As an added service to our owners, direct deposit/electronic payments are now available. If you would like to have your HAP directly deposited into your bank account, here's all you need to do: Request the Direct Deposit Form from MDHA's Accounting Unit by calling 305-250-5240. Carefully review, complete, and sign the form. A voided check from your bank account to be used for direct deposit needs to be submitted along with the form. Both documents must be sent to MDHA, Attention: Cassandra Ojomo, Accounting, 2103 Coral Way, 6th floor, Miami, FL 33145.

Workshop Held for New and Sub Rehab Property Owners

On January 17 and 25, 2006, Private Rental

Housing's Multi-family staff, in conjunction with HUD,

sponsored a workshop with New Construction/Substantial Rehabilitation program for owners and

managers. This workshop enhanced participants' knowledge of HUD and MDHA policies. Topics included annual financial statement submissions and HUD/MDHA reviews, transfer of ownership processes, REAC physical inspection procedural updates, and HAP contracts. The approximately 45 attendees at each session greatly benefited from the discussions of the new regulations implemented by HUD. On behalf of MDHA, we would like to thank David Fenwick of HUD for providing this valuable information. ■



PRH staff Jackie Dana, Mercy Martinez and Suzanne Torano take notes at the January HUD workshop.

TOP FIVE LANDLORD QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

Q: When will rent increases be reinstated?

A: As explained in our March 1, 2005 letter to Section 8 owners, in December 2004, HUD reduced the amount of subsidies housing agencies across the country needed to maintain their respective voucher programs. In order to continue serving the same number of clients, MDHA decided the suspension of rent increases was the only alternative. We are pleased to announce that we are reinstating rent increases beginning with HAP contract anniversaries of June 1, 2006.

Q: What is the difference between fair market rent (FMR) and payment standard (PS)?

A: Every year, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) conducts a national study to determine FMRs. The main uses of FMRs are to determine payment standard amounts for the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program; to determine initial renewal rents for some expiring project-based Section 8 contracts; to determine initial rents for housing assistance payment contracts in the Moderate Rehabilitation Single Room

Occupancy program; and to serve as a rent ceiling in the HOME rental assistance program.

Payment standard, on the other hand, is set by the individual housing agency (HA). These amounts reflect the maximum subsidy the HA can pay depending on the tenant's income. The PS is established somewhere between 90% and 110% of the FMR. Any rent beyond 110% of FMR requires HUD approval. MDHA's PS is the highest of any other housing agency's in Miami-Dade County.

Please note that all rents subsidized under all Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher programs must meet reasonable rent standards.

Q: Why can't a unit be inspected for housing quality standards (HQS) before the tenant is determined eligible for tenancy?

A: MDHA must assure that prior to conducting a housing quality standards (HQS) inspection a tenant is eligible for tenancy at that particular unit. Additionally, certain information needs to be conveyed to MDHA, which is obtained and verified primarily when a tenant presents a Requests for Tenancy

Approval. When these criteria are met, MDHA will conduct an inspection to make the best use of our time and resources. We appreciate your understanding and cooperation.

Q: What do I need to do to effect a change of ownership?

A: Owners are not allowed to sell their property without prior written authorization of MDHA. If you plan to sell your property and the new owner intends to continue leasing the unit under Section 8, you must contact MDHA prior to the closing in order to begin the transfer of ownership process. If the new owner does not intend to retain the tenant, you should consult your lease agreement concerning the termination and advise the tenant to contact MDHA for a change of dwelling.

Q: What must I do if I want my tenant to move out of my unit?

A: The lease has certain stipulations for termination at the end of the lease term. Generally, there is a provision in the lease to give notice of the termination to the tenant. Please be sure to inform MDHA and advise the tenant to contact MDHA as well for a change of dwelling.